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To: CIA/ONE - Mr. Bundy

Via IAD

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Attached please find a copy of the report
discussed in our meeting of January 24, 1952.

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Attachment: IR No. 5641

Date: 1-25-52

From:

Acting Assistant Chief

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Per

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Intelligence Report

No. 5641 Date: October 9, 1951

Office of Intelligence Research

EUROPEAN ATTITUDES WHICH AFFECT U.S.
INFLUENCE IN EUROPE

ABSTRACT

1. Role of public opinion. The development of the East-West struggle and the growth of US power in Europe have led to a situation in which most European issues are decided by overriding considerations of Western grand strategy. As a result, most Western European governments are less sensitive than formerly to undercurrents of public opinion. This relative immunity against popular attitudes within which US-European relations tend to develop does not mean, however, that at a certain pressure point, the weight of public opinion may not enforce a reorientation of European national policy which would seriously affect US-European relations. Those issues which are close to such a pressure point as distinguished from the more reconcilable issues, are identified below.

2. Fundamental differences in Western European viewpoints. The issues which constitute the foci of serious threats to US-European relationships derive chiefly from the continuance of conspicuously bad economic conditions and from a different evaluation of Soviet intentions and US policy. Despite the spectacular recovery of the postwar Western European economy, the living and working conditions of the majority of people have not greatly improved. Moreover, the impact of economic and social dislocations is likely to increase during the rearmament period. Under the resulting popular and political pressures, the reluctance of most Western European governments to carry through a large-scale rearmament program will continue and increase. That reluctance is reinforced by popular unwillingness to believe that the USSR will launch a global war or invade Europe outside the Soviet orbit.

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3. Effects of basic differences in US-European viewpoints. These basic European attitudes have 1) caused delay in the acceptance and implementation of programs for Western European economic and military integration; 2) contributed to the continued strength of Communism in France and Italy; and 3) induced most Western European governments -- often against their will -- to sustain reservations against American policy in Europe. These attitudes are unlikely to be alleviated "automatically" by the strategic necessities of the East-West conflict except in the event of evident Soviet aggressive intentions in Europe or an amelioration of social and economic dislocations. In the absence of such developments, any attempt to force the pace on the most sensitive issues such as German rearmament and the sharing of defense burdens may upset the present precarious balance between American and national European interests.

A. The Role of Public Opinion in the Formation of Governmental Policies in Western Europe.

1. Any attempt to evaluate the degree to which European attitudes may influence the development of US-European relationships must take into consideration the fact that the requirements of the East-West struggle and the rising American power in Europe determine directly or indirectly most European policy decisions. The threat of Communism and the inability of Western Europe to defend itself without American aid in the case of Soviet aggression provide the framework for the grouping of the political parties, for the formation of governments, and for the formulation of policy. The same factors also sustain otherwise precarious governmental majorities or coalitions, and justify unpopular policies.

2. This situation has noticeably promoted political stability. Under the overriding considerations of the East-West struggle, most Western European governments are less sensitive than before to popular pressure and to the undercurrents of public opinion. The majority of the population either accepts governmental policy as inevitable under the conditions of the East-West struggle, or is indifferent to all kinds of politics. There seem to be no promising alternatives. Partly because of disillusionment over the re-appearance of the status quo after the war, partly because of the general bureaucratization of public life, there is a considerable decline in political interest and political participation among large groups of the population. Policy-making is thus left to small circles of professional politicians who control their parties and fractions rather than being controlled by them. Public opinion decisively influences policy making only in exceptional cases.

3. These tendencies permit US-European relations to develop

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within a framework which is to a high degree immune against popular attitudes and opinions. This relative immunity does not mean that, at a certain pressure point, the weight of public opinion may not enforce a re-orientation of European national policy which would seriously affect US-European relations. In the subsequent discussion, an attempt will be made to identify those issues which are close to such pressure point, and to distinguish them from the more negotiable issues.

B. Reconcilable Differences in US-European Points of View.

4. There is a large range of anti-American or "neutralist" attitudes which, although widespread and vociferous, are not likely to have decisive influence on the shaping of US-European relations. These are attitudes toward issues which do not seem to concern the vital daily needs of the population although they are kept before the public mind by the interested political parties and their press. To this category belong the widespread criticism of "American materialism," the resentment against American propaganda, rejection of the atomic bomb, the protest against a political and military affiliation of Spain with the Western defense system, the German campaign against the "reserved rights" of the High Commission. In the same category must be included issues which, although they point up differences between national European and American interests, are regarded and discussed chiefly as strategic issues to be decided by the policy-makers on strategic grounds. Such issues are, for example, American-imposed restrictions on Western European trade with the East, the Allied regulation of the German export quota for coal, US interests in Morocco.

5. Differences between European and American attitudes toward these issues have caused and will continue to cause difficulties in the implementation of American policies and may well require modifications of these policies in accordance with European national interests. However, these issues will probably in the long run be aligned with basic American interests because the vital requirements of Western grand strategy, European dependence on US aid, and the anti-Communist sentiment of the majority of the population and especially of the national governments are likely to supersede the affected national, class, and group interests. Rearmament itself might be included among these issues as long as it does not negatively affect the living standard of large parts of the population.

C. Fundamental Differences in West European Points of View.

6. In contrast to these relatively easily negotiable differences, there are others which constitute the foci of serious threats to US-European relationships. These are the issues where vital national and group interests feed on deep-rooted and

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powerful sentiments of large parts of the European population. They derive chiefly from the existence of conspicuously bad and explosive economic conditions, and from a different evaluation of Soviet intentions and American policy. Such tendencies are least prevalent in the Benelux and Scandinavian countries, and strongest in France, Italy, and Germany.

7. The development of the post-war Western European economy has led to a situation in which the spectacular recovery has not much improved the living and working conditions of the majority of the population. The result is a strong feeling among the underprivileged people especially in France and Italy that they have no vital stake to defend in a system which has not succeeded in providing for them a better existence. Rising prices and profits on the one side, low wages on the other; extreme luxury in food and housing for the rich, an extremely meager diet and lodging for the poor -- while this contrast has been characteristic of wide areas in France and Italy for a long time, it is now aggravated by several factors:

a. Large parts of the population expected a fundamental change in their depressed status after the defeat of Fascism and Nazism; the restoration of the status-quo came to them as a shock-like disappointment.

b. There is a widespread tendency to put the blame for the continued social and economic grievances on the resurgence of the various groups and institutions which were identified with Fascism, collaborationism, and with the war.

c. Considerable segments of the population, especially among labor and the old middle classes, believe that Western European rearmament accelerates the inflationary trend and strengthens the position of big business and of the "nouveaux riches".

8. The coincidence of these factors has facilitated Communist and neutralist propaganda that American postwar policy is chiefly responsible for the recurring economic dislocations, for the restoration of the compromised ruling groups, and for the continued depressed status of a large part of the population. It is argued that American aid in goods and credits has chiefly been used in the interest of certain privileged groups and businesses, and that, under the conditions prevailing in most of Western Europe, American sponsored rearmament would further divert economic activity from the production of really needed consumers' goods. The Western European governments have made serious efforts to combat this argument -- most successfully in the UK, least successfully in France and Italy, where the contrast between the life of the privileged and the unprivileged is far more ubiquitous than in the UK.

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9. The impact of the social and economic dislocations on the Western European governments as well as populations is likely to grow during the period of rearmament. The governments will be faced with persistent demands for higher wages, control of prices and profits, and a redistribution of the burden of rearmament. In France and Italy, compromise solutions which would satisfy labor will be made difficult by the attitude of business and its political representation on the one side, and by the powerful trade union organizations on the other. In Germany, where the Social Democratic trade unions are amenable to the rearmament program, the rightist influence in the Adenauer coalition and the political opposition of the Social Democratic Party leadership are likely to prevent a lasting agreement in the near future.

10. Under this popular and political pressure, reluctance of most of the Western European governments to carry through a large-scale rearmament program will continue and increase -- unless there is definite indication of Soviet aggressive intentions in Europe. This reluctance is reenforced by another factor which decisively influences American-European relations: a large part of the European people seems to have adopted an evaluation of Soviet intentions different from that determining American policy in Europe. They are apparently reluctant to believe that the USSR will launch a global war or invade Europe outside the Soviet orbit. Whether or not this is merely wishful thinking, it facilitates an interpretation of American policy in terms of "US imperialism" and encroachment on the national sovereignty of the European countries. Such an interpretation is not confined to the Communists and their fellow-travellers but is also prevalent among the left wing of the middle-of-the road parties in France and Italy. In the UK, this attitude is mainly confined to the Bevanite faction of the Labor Party, and government policies on national defense are unlikely to be affected despite much dissatisfaction with the impact of rearmament on living standards and social welfare. The fact that Germany, at least its politicians and non-Communist political parties, follows most closely the American evaluation of Soviet intentions, aggravates the French-German antagonism, especially with regard to the problem of German rearmament. A large part of the French people still consider the threat of a resurgent Germany at least as serious as the threat of a Soviet invasion. More recently, the amazing rise of Germany's competitive power has added economic to political apprehensions, which have been complicated by the vociferous German agitation for a definite revision of the Ruhr and Saar settlement. The development of these antagonisms is also affecting UK policy insofar as the UK is inclined to recognize the specific French security problem vis-a-vis Germany.

D. Effect of Basic Differences on US-European Relations.

11. The attitudes discussed above have principally affected

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This seems opinion, specifically on the unification issue, would not slow down
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rearmament and integration WPA. - I agree!

the progress and direction of Western European integration, economic as well as strategic. They have caused delay in the acceptance and implementation of the Schuman Plan, jeopardized the progress of German rearmament, and slowed down the formation of an effective Western European defense force. Moreover, they have been largely responsible for the continued strength of Communism in France and Italy. And they have induced most Western European governments -- often against their will -- to sustain reservations against American policy in Europe. The answer to the question whether these attitudes are likely to jeopardize American policy depends so much on the international political and economic development that only a tentative evaluation for the near future can be attempted.

12. In view of the widespread and deep-rooted popular sentiments and grievances underlying these attitudes it seems unlikely that they will be "automatically" alleviated by the strategic necessities of the East-West conflict. This could be expected only in the events of evident Soviet aggressive intentions in Europe, and correction of the social and economic dislocations in Western Europe -- events which cannot be counted on for the period under consideration. Conversely, Soviet "appeasement" policy and an aggravation of the social and economic dislocations may enforce a change in the governments of the major Western European countries. Such a change would probably be to the right in the UK, France, and Italy; to a Social Democratic government in Germany. While a conservative British government would facilitate a faster co-ordination with American policy, the same does not necessarily hold true for France and Italy. In these countries, a rightist regime is likely to insist more than its predecessors on certain national interests which would complicate inter-European and US-European relations. For example, in France, such a regime would press for French military preponderance on the continent and would bar a quick Saar settlement in favor of Germany; in Italy, it would be uncompromising on the Trieste issue and the revision of the peace treaty.

13. The rise of extreme nationalism would militate against the establishment of a European army in which the various national contingents would be merged; the European governments would demand the highest degree of independence and self-sufficiency for their military units and general staffs. In any case, the more rightist regimes would make strong efforts to build up large national armed forces against Communism within and without. These efforts would meet with equally strong resistance on the part of the Communists and of all those non-Communist labor and middle class groups which would be alienated by the rightist domestic policy. Repression would grow in scope and intensity; in the mind of a large part of the European people, America would be identified with the establishment of neo-Fascism,

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and the American program for the defense of democratic Europe against Communism would be interpreted as a program for the defense of rightist political groups. Growing internal instability would increase pressure on the US for more economic and financial aid.

14. Change in emphasis from a European to a national rearmament program would also be promoted by a Social Democratic regime in Western Germany. Such a regime would continue and even strengthen the military and economic reliance on the Western camp, but would concentrate its efforts on the speedy restoration of Germany's full sovereignty, abolition of the reserved rights of the Occupying Powers, considerable reduction of the occupation costs, revision of the Schuman Plan and of the Ruhr and Saar settlements in favor of Germany. These efforts would be coupled with German demands for larger American military commitments sufficiently strong to guarantee a defense on the Elbe and preferably east of the Elbe. The program would probably lead to a deterioration of French-German relations, especially if it would coincide with the establishment of a rightist-nationalist government in France.

15. If the present or similar Western European governments should continue in office during the period under consideration, the overriding desire for peace and the widespread apprehension of unilateral and "too rough" American actions would work as brakes on the readiness of most Western European governments to give all-out support to American policies.

16. Barring a shift in Soviet policy and a deterioration of economic conditions, this reluctance is not likely to change the basic US-American relationships. However, any attempt to force the pace on the most sensitive issues by making concessions to specific interests at the expense of others (especially in the question of the European Army, German rearmament, the burden of defense) may upset the precarious balance between American and national European interests.

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